

St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103704
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	286729
Inspection dates	15 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janice Wale
Headteacher	Mrs Geraldine Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	29–31 January 2002
School address	Winsford Avenue Allesley Park Coventry CV5 9HZ
Telephone number	024 766 74092
Fax number	024 766 91806

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; pupils' personal development and well-being; and the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in helping the school to improve. Additionally, the school's procedures to safeguard the welfare of children were checked. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation; national performance data and the school's own assessment and other records; observations of pupils in lessons and in other activities around the school; scrutiny of pupils' books and other work; discussions with staff, pupils, parents and the chair of governors; and parents' questionnaire responses. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average, and often over-subscribed. It is located in an area of residential housing on the western edge of Coventry, although its religious character draws pupils from further afield. Social and economic conditions in the vicinity of the school are broadly average, although pupils themselves generally come from more favourable backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal and the proportion with learning difficulties are both well below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and very few speak English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher had been responsible for day-to-day leadership and management of the school for three months, because of the ill health of the headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St John's is a good school. The school's leadership has been highly successful in meeting its aim 'to create a school where children feel secure and happy, where the Christian ethos is apparent in our attitudes and relationships and where we work in partnership with parents to provide the best education for our children.' The school cultivates an ethos of mutual respect where the views of staff, pupils and parents are considered carefully in shaping new developments. As a consequence, parents are highly supportive of the work of the school. Through a very active and well-organised school council, pupils feel confident in having their say on a range of issues, such as the design and implementation of the school behaviour policy and the organisation of the school canteen. Their active involvement in a wide range of charitable and environmental campaigns and activities is further evidence of the excellent contribution pupils make to the school and wider community. Through such activities, and through the high expectations teachers have of pupils' conduct, pupils develop a strong awareness of the needs of others. They co-operate very well in the completion of tasks, and their very good behaviour shows a high regard for the safety and well-being of others. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent.

That pupils get great enjoyment from their education is plain to see, from their excellent attendance records to the smiles on their faces at the start of the day. 'Our children are very happy at school and feel safe and secure', wrote one parent, reflecting the views of many. 'They very much enjoy their lessons and have gained confidence through the encouragement and positive approach of the teaching staff'. This enjoyment is stimulated by good teaching that makes effective use of a wide range of resources and activities to help pupils learn well. The curriculum is good and well balanced. It ensures that pupils are well prepared with the literacy and numeracy skills so important for later life, and provides a broad range of opportunities to develop wider skills, interests and talents. Many pupils are involved in singing or playing musical instruments, and standards of musical performance are high. Sport and physical education have been boosted by strong links with a local specialist sports college, and this supports pupils' good awareness of how to live healthily.

Pupils achieve well in the school. By the time they leave in Year 6, standards are above average overall and exceptionally high in English. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage (Reception Class) where, having joined with skills which are broadly in line with those expected for their age, they leave having exceeded nearly all the goals expected of them. Although, meeting their expected goals, children's writing skills are not quite as good as other areas of their learning, and appropriate action is being taken to provide children with more opportunities to practise their writing. Reception class staff assess children's capabilities effectively to ensure that tasks and activities mostly offer the right level of challenge to help children make good progress. The 'integrated day' offers children an engaging variety of activities which is supported by a very good outdoor learning area, although sometimes children need clearer guidance about how their activities link to and build on the skills they have previously acquired.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 took a significant downturn in 2006, falling from above average to average. There were particular weaknesses in writing and mathematics, especially at the higher levels. These weaknesses mirrored to some degree the main areas highlighted for improvement in the last inspection report, and the school has taken action to improve performance in these areas. In particular, assessment systems have been strengthened by setting pupils targets for improving their performance in both literacy and numeracy. Teachers are making progressively better use of these targets to let pupils know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers regularly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' performance in half-termly tests to diagnose general areas for improvement. As a result, standards in mathematics in Year 2 have risen this year, especially at the higher levels. In writing, however, while overall standards have improved, the proportion reaching the higher levels in Year 2 tests remains low. This is in stark contrast to the exceptionally high standards reached at the higher levels in English by the end of Year 6. The outstanding progress made by pupils from Years 3 to 6 in English is partly due to the very good opportunities which pupils are given to develop their writing skills in a variety of forms across a range of subjects. Teachers' marking is also more effective in older year groups in reminding pupils of the need to continue to apply basic grammatical principles previously learned, as well as the need to develop new skills.

The school gives good care, support and guidance to pupils. There are robust procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being, although the school recognises the need to give more regular training to staff to refresh their understanding of the school's child protection policy and procedures. The progress of individual pupils is tracked carefully, allowing staff to intervene with additional support when required. As a consequence, pupils with learning difficulties, and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress. The school goes to considerable lengths to ensure that appropriate provision is made to meet the individual needs of all pupils, in close consultation with parents.

The school has a good understanding of its overall strengths and weaknesses, which is developed through careful analysis of performance data and of the views of its users. Through this effective self-evaluation, it has a coherent set of priorities for improving school performance. However, although it recognises *which* aspects of performance need to be improved, the school improvement plan is not sufficiently specific about *how* they can be improved. This is partly because subject leaders and co-ordinators are not involved enough in the monitoring of teaching and learning to diagnose weaknesses in detail and offer clear prescriptions for improvement. Nonetheless, leadership and management are good overall, and have demonstrated a good capacity to improve further. Senior leaders have sustained generally high standards in the school and developed its strong ethos. Very good resources for learning have been secured. The imminent development of childcare facilities on site is an indication of the determination of governors and senior leaders to further enhance the quality of service provided to the community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment in writing by the end of Year 2.
- Develop the role of subject leaders and co-ordinators in analysing strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, so that actions required to improve performance can be more clearly specified in the school improvement plan.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average, with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex B



16 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Church of England School, Coventry CV5 9HZ

Many thanks for the welcome you gave me when I visited your school for its recent inspection. It was good to hear from you and your parents about how much you enjoy going to school. This was evident to me as soon as I saw the smiles on your faces as you arrived! It is clear why you enjoy school so much. You are well taught by teachers who use the good facilities and resources of the school to make your learning interesting. The teachers and other staff take good care of you and help you feel very safe. They keep a careful eye on your progress to make sure that all of you stay on track and achieve well, so that by the time you leave you reach standards that are above average. The school offers you a good curriculum to develop your skills and a wide range of activities to develop your talents and interests. It is pleasing to see so many of you reaching high standards in music.

Like you, I think St John's is a good school. It develops your personal and social skills exceptionally well by encouraging you to respect and take care of each other, and to co-operate well when you work together. You are given many opportunities to make excellent contributions to the work of the school and wider community, for instance, through your work with charities and in support of the environment. Your school council is very well organised and makes sure your voice is heard on many issues.

It is a mark of the good leadership of the school that those in charge listen to your views and those of your parents to help them understand how to make further improvements. I have identified two main ways in which I think the school can get even better. Firstly, more pupils should be reaching higher levels of performance in their writing at the end of Year 2. They can do this by making sure that they keep working towards their targets but remembering to make use of all of the skills they have learned in the past. Secondly, I have asked those teachers in charge of subjects in the school to have a closer look at your books and at how well you are learning in lessons so that they can develop clearer plans to help you improve your work. You too can help the school improve by continuing to work hard and do your best.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson, lead inspector